

A program at the Santa Ynez Valley Historical Society Annual Dinner Meeting at The Alisal Guest Ranch, Sycamore Room, Solvang, Date: January 25, 1981. Speakers: Tom Petersen, Tony Tognazini.

I got started in high school making scale models of railroad trains and from there went into the historical part of it especially in regard to our area (The Santa Ynez Valley) and the Pacific Coast Railway. Tonight sitting across the table from me is the past owner of the Pacific Coast Railroad and in fact he still owns a piece of it in Santa Maria. So this has been a delightful evening for me. We have several parts of this non-technical program and I'm not going to bore you with all kinds of statistics because I can't remember them anyway. Tonight we have a copy of the movie of the last run of the train from Los Olivos taken by the late Orin Taft and his wife, Ellen Taft Gleason. We also have a map of the route the train took and a few slides you can see of the right of way from the San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara County lines. These slides have been taken over the past several years. In addition, I will ask Tony Tognazini to help me out with some of the interesting things that he has told me about his involvement with the Pacific Coast Railroad. Now lets begin with the film of the Last Run.

The part of the film that you just saw from Los Olivos out nearly to Zaca Station and from there it nearly touched Hwy 101. Zaca Station goes into the east and from Wigmore to Los Alamos and that stretch lied in about the south bound lanes of 101. From Los Alamos to Orcutt, that big stretch in where roughly if follows Hwy. 1 to Careaga to Harris, then Bicknell. I don't believe there



is anything there at least I haven't been able to find anything. At Divide there is a P.G.&E. substation and that is at the top of the hill south of Orcutt, just off of the highway that goes to Vandenberg. At Orcutt there are still parts of the foundation of the railroad station. In Santa Maria the depot was on the corner where the tracks crossed W. Main Street and the Betteravia branch had a ware house there until recently. Of course one of the unusual things about this railroad was that it had an electrified branch and that ran from Santa Maria to Guadalupe. This was unusual for a railroad to have an electrified section. Further north through the Nipomo Valley the tracks lay below the highway down in the creek bottom. The summit curve is visible from Hwy. 101 and there it crossed the highway then that is the last you can see if it from 101 except where it crosses further up by Miles and Avila, right on the branch that went from San Luis Obispo to Port Harford area. Question: Did you say there was a branch to Sisquoc? Yes, there was a branch to Sisquoc and Tony maybe you would like to comment on that because you know about that. Tony Tognazini: First I have to make a comment about the track out near Edna. Strange things have happened there and apparently will remain forever unless something brings it to the surface. The old Pacific Coast has a grand father clause right so that the Southern Pacific crosses the Pacific Coast not the PC crossing the SP. That right is in perpetuity! So some day I think we will park a truck up there and see what happens to the Southern Pacific. Might be interesting. On the Sisquoc branch we are desperately trying to keep all the part of this railroad alive so one of our



last attempts was to haul gravel from the Sisquoc gravel pit to Santa Maria and San Luis Obispo. We attempted to run two strings of cars to San Luis a day and two to Santa Maria. Well, we did not make that very often and one of the troubles was that we overloaded the train on the Nipomo grade, and we could not make it to Arroyo Grande. We would have to back up all the way down and fill up with water again. So there went the schedule. We finally discovered we were hauling about 100 tons per train and that compares with 25 tons per diesel truck. One operator and no train to maintain so you can add the mathematics yourself so that is one of the reasons that the train evaporated. We did try desperately to keep the track from mile post 12 just east of San Luis Obispo to Post San Luis (Port Harford) and the dock because we thought water transportation would still save the railroad. I phoned the headquarters in Santa Fe, and they were most gracious and sent a vice president out who spent three or four days here and he said how they would have wanted to know us 50 years ago. They had tried to bring the Santa Fe west from Fresno to the coast and could not get across and here we were with all the facilities that they wanted but too late as it turned out. You could not make a freight train pay under 300 miles. Today it is 500 miles. So that short haul did not work out. It became apparent that there was nothing more to do but face the facts and we sold the rest of the railroad. But part of the railroad is still alive at White Pass, Yukon Territory, Canada. Quite a bit of the equipment is in the belt line at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, and one shipment is at the bottom of the <sup>a</sup>ocen. It was heading for New Guinea.



During the war the Japs got the ship and sank her. Tom Petersen: Tony is owner of the Fort San Luis Transportation Company and that was the company that bought out the Pacific Coast Railroad in 1939. Slide Show: This is a picture looking west in Los Olivos toward the depot, the oak tree there is the one you still see along Hwy 154. Back of the railroad car is Mattei's Tavern. This picture was taken at the intersection of 154 and Grand Ave. Los Olivos when we laid some water pape lines to serve the town. We discovered these rails under this intersection. So before they covered the line up I took some pictures. This picture is of the old Standard Oil warehouse along 154 in Los Olivos. The sign is gone off the side and the warehouse is no longer used to dispence oil. This picture was taken up on Ballard Canyon Road and you can generally follow the railroad right of way out of Los Olivos. At this point it about parallels 154 at that location. People don't believe this picture because it is completly yellow but those are wild flowers that showed up that year. This photo is at the intersection of 101 and 154 with the water tank standing on top of the right of way, there are still some ties in that cut below that oak tree. This photo is looking toward Los Alamos. Next photo is of the Los Alamos warehouse that is now an Antique Store. This photo is at Divide, the PG&E substation is back a little and the picture was taken before the new four land highway was put in. This was the depot at the intersection of the tracks at W. Main, Santa Maria and these tracks are Tony's and not part of the Santa Maria Valley Railroad that belongs to the Hancock Family. The photo is fo a building that burned down about four months ago and



was located about half way between the west of Santa Maria and Gradalupe and was called Betteravia Junction. This is of the bridge at Avila, the town is in the background. It still stands. Traffic can no longer go over that bridge. This photo shows the Union Pier at Port San Luis. There are rails still laying there and they have a car out there that they use to repair the pier. This is the last slide tonight and it is the road along between the Union Pier and Port Harford Pier where the Port Fish Company was located at the warehouse on the pier itself. There is not a great deal of the railroad left but one of the most interesting things I got involved with about 2 or 3 years ago when the Railroad Museum got started in Sacramento. At the time you sold the railroad Tony, Ward Kinball bought the caboose No.2 and hauled it down for his model railroad which is full size and called the Grizzly Flats Railraod. The State of California Historical Railroad in Sacramento purchased that caboose about 2 years ago and did a complete restoration job on it and it is now in the museum building at Old Sacramento. I happen to get into that because I heard they were going to buy it and then I talked to a couple of fellows I knew and we worked on the project, they saw my photos that you have just seen. They wanted to copy these photos of the Engine 106 that turned over at Los Alamos in that bad accident with a truck, in 1938. The engine was burned and so it was scraped and the only thing left was the bell and I have heard some interesting things about that bell that the Historical Museum now has in the Mary Davidge Courtyard. Question: Are any of the buildings from the PCRR going to be made into Historic Landmarks?



Tony: You <sup>smw</sup> was the pictures of thee warehouse at Betteravia, this was the end of the warehouse business as far as the train was concerned because those buildings were constructed for those early days and no one thought of rats or vermin and so now they are unserviceable since World War II. That doomed all the old buildings. We tried to preserve the station house in Santa Maria but it was impossible and I think not any buildings of the system can be saved. There is one small section of our milling warehouse in Santa Maria that goes back to 1884 but it has to go too. It is <sup>(STILL THERE 89)</sup> not serviceable for modern times. At Zaca Station near Hwy. 101 and Hwy. 154 if you slow down by the oak tree you will see some cement works that were from the foundation of the original wagon scale. That wagon scale was the office of the warehouse and it took all the local produce. The bridges that were build for the railroad were fantastic because they could carry huge weights. They were put together with compression not bolts. The San Luis Car Yard reconstructed all the cars that were left for service and were shipped then on the Southern Pacific flat bed which was kind of a hard thing to do during the war and with that job done it was the end of the machine shop in San Luis Obispo. It was a very nice shop. So what I am saying is that we had to hang the crepe on one part after another of the railroad, always hoping we could find a way out. Its been a great experience, I ~~h~~ave enjoyed it, most of my life and we are not at the end yet. Port San Luis was condemned by the state but I went to court and won the suit and got the port back and sold part to the state. The road at the port was a quite a problem as the cliffs are very soft and in

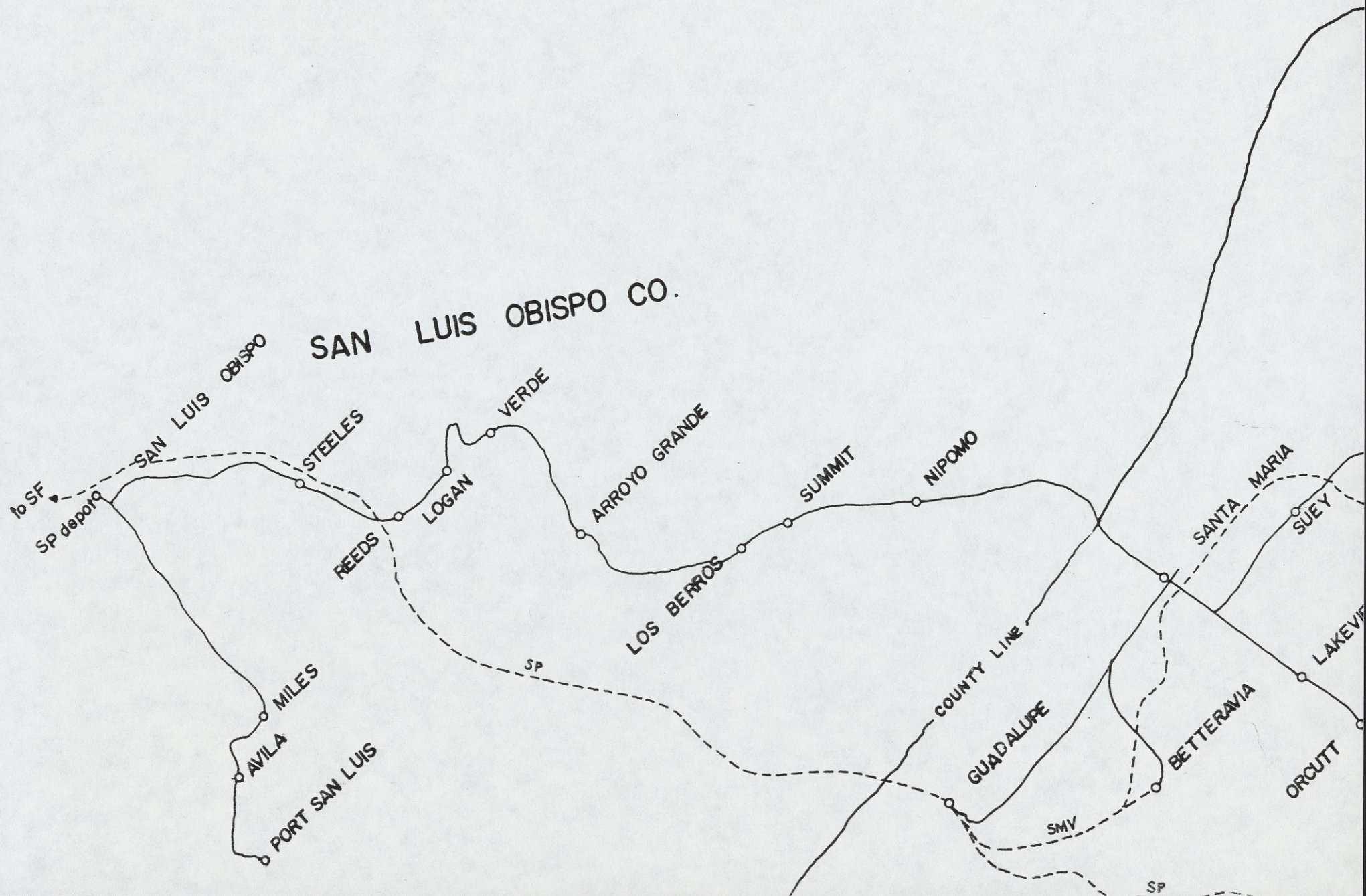


heavy rain they would slide across the track. Mr. Bell and I were the two principals in buying the railroad. One day Mr. Bell drove his Lincoln Continental on to the bridge at Port Harford. One final story.... We decided to have the last run of old 105, as you recall 105 was murdered by our own oil truck, so we gathered a (ostear) group of people we thought would be interested, Chuck Jacobson was manager of the company, and he decided to take the ~~throttle~~<sup>++</sup> of the engine, so he asked me up with him and I was working the brake. We drove out to the pier with all this string of cars behind us, with people in them, ran out to the end, and stopped without any trouble but going back I told Chuck he had better put on the brakes there was a chain there, and at that point we went three miles before we could stop. Tom! Thank you Tony. The other caboos that was on the railroad at the close of business is located behind the Red Barn, on Sagunto Street, Santa Ynez, behind the old high school tennis courts. That caboos was bought by Pea Soup Anderson (Robert Andersen) and hauled here for kids to play house in. I did not recognize the caboos because it did not have the cupalo<sup>o</sup> on the top but Pea Soup told me that when it was hauled from Santa Maria the truck did not stop at the truss bridge at the river and they lost the whole upper part of that cupalo. When they got down here they built a new one but it never looked right. Thank you all for coming to the dinner tonight, it has been a great evening and thanks to Tony Tognazini<sup>z</sup> for helping me.



# PACIFIC

# COAST





# COAST RAILWAY

